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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 CANBERRA 000594

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TAGS: [AS](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: DEFENSE MINISTER ON AFGHANISTAN, DPRK AND
SPACE/MISSILE ISSUES

REF: (A) CANBERRA 535 (B) CANBERRA 529

Classified By: CHARGE DANIEL A. CLUNE. REASON: 1.4 (C)

¶1. (S/NF) Summary: Recently appointed Defense Minister John Faulkner told Charge on June 25 that during his discussions with the RC South Ministers and NATO Defense Ministers in Netherlands and Belgium earlier this month, he urged that the issue of command in Oruzgan Province be resolved before August 2010. Faulkner said he made it plain to his counterparts that the command was NATO's responsibility. Faulkner expressed his willingness to promoting a "mutually beneficial" result in the U.S. proposal for space situational awareness cooperation. On the issue of DPRK and nuclear proliferation, Mr. Faulkner noted that the GOA is seeking the agreement of the Malaysian government to the deployment of several Australian surveillance aircraft to Butterworth airbase in Malaysia. End summary.

"FRANK" EXPRESSION OF VIEWS ON ORUZGAN LEADERSHIP

¶2. (C/NF) During a courtesy call on the recently appointed Defense Minister on June 25, Charge asked Faulkner about his recent discussions with RC South Ministers and NATO Defense Ministers in Netherlands and Belgium earlier this month. Faulkner said that he had been "frank" with his counterparts in expressing Australia's views that it is NATO's responsibility to address the post-August 2010 leadership issue in Oruzgan Province. Australia has a significant commitment in Oruzgan. NATO must accept that this is a very urgent issue, Faulkner emphasized. (note: The Dutch DCM told poloff on June 25 that Dutch Defense Minister Middelkoop opened the RC-South Dutch-Australian bi-lateral marginal meeting by bluntly stating the Netherlands were relinquishing the lead role in Urugan. Faulkner responded in equally blunt fashion that Australia was not going to assume that role. Having stated their positions unequivocally in their opening salvos, the two sat in a lengthening and increasingly uncomfortable silence for some time (two minutes per the Dutch DCM), until Australian Chief of Defense Houston broke the tension by asking his Dutch counterpart a question.)

MORE OPTIMISM ON THE GROUND IN AFGHANISTAN THAN IN EUROPE

¶3. (C/NF) Faulkner said there was a "positive feedback" in his formal and bilateral discussions with the Europeans concerning the new U.S. command structure and policy direction in Afghanistan as well as on Australia's expanded contribution. He said that the Europeans were less upbeat over the longer-term outlook for Afghanistan as it leads up to the election. Faulkner contrasted this with the more optimistic tactical briefings he received from the Australian military that he received during his subsequent visit to Afghanistan. Faulkner allowed that the more positive on the

ground perspective in Afghanistan is not getting through to the Australian public and the GOA must do a better job on highlighting the positive aspects of Australia's efforts in Oruzgan. He added that as Defense Minister he needs to talk more persuasively to the public about the reasons for Australia's commitment in Afghanistan and the success it is achieving there.

DEFENSE WHITE PAPER AND MISSILE DEFENSE

¶4. (C/NF) In response to Charge's query regarding the GOA's Defense White Paper's language on missile defense and the importance of this issue to the United States, Faulkner replied that he needs more time to learn more about the issue, but appreciated its importance to the United States. His predecessor, Joel Fitzgibbon, had noted the need to gradually bring along the left wing of the party on missile defense. Deputy Foreign Minister Mike Pezzullo had indicated that the language in the White Paper had been governed by Fitzgibbon's desire to avoid party divisions at the Australian Labor Party's annual national conference next month. (Ref. B)

SPACE SITUATIONAL AWARENESS (SSA)

¶5. (C/NF) Faulkner acknowledged the importance of SSA and said that the U.S. proposal is being examined at the agency level. The results of the agencies' work should go to the cabinet next month. Faulkner noted that earlier this year U.S. Defense Secretary Gates had written to Fitzgibbon looking to address gaps in SSA coverage and seeking GOA

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support. Faulkner said that Australia is "favorably disposed" to this proposal. Faulkner hoped that the GOA will formalize its position next month, prior to the ALP party conference. He expressed his willingness to work to achieve a "mutually beneficial" result.

DPRK AND USCR RESOLUTION 1874

6 (S/NF) Faulkner reiterated the GOA's support for "hail and query" of suspect North Korean shipping. He noted that the GOA is currently talking to the government of Malaysia about allowing several Royal Australian Air Force P-3 maritime surveillance aircraft to deploy to Butterworth Airfield. From this airfield in Malaysia, the aircraft could monitor the North Korean freighter Kang Nam as it approaches Burma.